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IMAGE IS EVERYTHING!

Christina Short and Susanna Ross were accomplished businesswomen, and each spent years marketing the latest chemical technologies for various large, global companies that employed them. Seeking a new challenge, Christina and Susanna teamed up with their spouses' Steve Szewczyk and Ronald Ryavec and decided to form their own business dedicated to bringing innovative products to the fastest growing market in the world, the digital ink market. Their dream was to develop the best inks in the world. Ink Big Co., Inc. was formed in February of 2002 as a culmination of that dream, and the company has made a major splash in the advanced materials technology industry.

Ink Big develops and manufactures innovative digital inkjet ink for industrial printers, as well as specialty protective coatings. The company's inks and coatings are used in indoor and outdoor point of purchase displays, signs and billboards, fleet graphics, bus and building wraps, and even wallpaper. Locally, Ink Big's inks and coatings have been used in manufacturing interior and exterior graphics found at both the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum and Gund Arena. The company also sells nationally and internationally, and some of the more notable use of Ink Big's inks were on bus wrap-arounds for Adidas and the Los Angeles Marathon, as well as Chrysler Corp. ads and Las Vegas promotions. Ink Big leads the graphic arts industry as the only manufacturer of nano-particle size ink, which was developed by Mr. Szewczyk. Through Chroma Enhancement Technology™, the company's proprietary technology, the nano-particle inks provide vibrant colors while maximizing print head life by minimizing inkjet clogging.

Starting a business comes with extensive challenges, and Ink Big has encountered and overcome its own unique set. Perhaps the major obstacle encountered was securing the necessary capital to get the business started. "The proprietary nature of our business made it especially difficult for us to use assets to secure capital," said Susanna Ross. "This presented a unique set of challenges as we were apprehensive about disclosing to anyone the proprietary information that gives our company the competitive edge needed in a very internationally aggressive marketplace". This dilemma, coupled with the fact that Ink Big was a start-up firm, made obtaining initial financing through a commercial lender a major challenge. Ink Big's four founders improvised and found unique solutions for its initial capital requirements. The company's success has since opened the door to more conventional sources of funding.

Monies for its recent expansion into a new building were secured through an SBA guaranteed loan provided by ShoreBank. Ink Big used the loan to acquire a 55,000 square foot building in Euclid, Ohio. "Having SBA participation in our real estate deal was pivotal," said Ms. Ross. "It enabled us to secure the loan though ShoreBank, and, perhaps more importantly, allowed the company to stay in the Cleveland area and play a role in community redevelopment through the use of a growing technology".

Ink Big Corporation has a bright future as it seeks to effectively manage its growth prospects. Its slogan, "Improving your Image", seems especially fitting given that the company is headquartered in Northeast Ohio, where the local economy stands to improve its image as the result of the successes of companies like Ink Big Corporation!